

**Media Contacts:**

Dave Phalen, Sheriff  
Fairfield County Sheriff's Office  
(740) 687-6751

Carrie Hoover, Community Affairs Director  
Village of Canal Winchester  
(614) 834-9727

November 26, 2008  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Sheriff Phalen Offers Safety Tips for Holiday Season

CANAL WINCHESTER - Christmas is a time for cheer, hope and joy but, unfortunately, it can be a time when crime becomes more prevalent.

“Crooks love Christmas as much as everyone else, but chiefly because it’s an opportunity for crime,” says Sheriff Dave Phalen, Fairfield County Sheriff.

Sheriff Phalen offers the safety tips below to help make your Christmas season a safe and happy one. Please take some time to read them and share them with your family and friends.

**If you’re shopping:**

- Stay alert and be aware of what’s going on around you.
- Deter pickpockets and purse-snatchers. Don’t overburden yourself with packages. Dress comfortably and casually. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Never leave your purse in a shopping cart or on a counter while you pay for your purchases. When using public restrooms, use extreme caution—try to avoid putting your purse on hooks or door handles.
- Never carry large amounts of money. Whenever possible, use credit cards or checks instead of cash. Make sure that only one credit slip is printed with your charge card and be sure to tear up any carbons.
- Park in a well-lit space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.
- When returning to your auto (or home), have your keys in your hand, ready to open the door.
- Before entering your vehicle, carefully check the front and rear seats and floors for anyone that may be hiding there. Lock your doors immediately after entering the vehicle.
- Try to shop with friends or relatives. There is safety in numbers.
- Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.

**If a stranger comes to the door, beware:**

- Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts. And it’s not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of others’ generosity during Christmas by going door-to-door for charitable donations when there’s no charity involved. Ask for identification and find out how the funds will be used. If you aren’t satisfied, don’t give. Help a charitable organization you are familiar with instead.

**Secure your car:**

- Cars can be an easy target for criminals. Park your car as close to your destination as possible and in a well-lit area.

- When you do your shopping, remember to store your packages in the trunk of the car and not on the back seat. Also, if you take packages to the car but plan to return to the store or mall, drive your car to a new location within the parking lot.
- Criminals can be on the lookout for unsuspecting shoppers who simply drop their purchases into the trunk and then return to keep shopping.
- When returning to your auto (or home), have your keys in your hand, ready to open the door. The few moments you save may keep you from becoming a crime victim.
- Before entering your vehicle, carefully check the front and rear seats and floors for anyone that may be hiding there. Lock your doors immediately after entering the vehicle.

**If you're out for the evening:**

- Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone's home.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

**If you're traveling:**

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home, shovel snow, and park in the driveway from time to time.
- Don't forget to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it's a sure sign you're gone.

**Take a Christmas inventory:**

- Christmas is a good time to update – or create – your home inventory. Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file.

-###-